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## THE ECONOMIC SCHOOLS AND THE TEACHING OF POLITICAL ECONOMY IN FRANCE.

A RECENT American writer, after justly praising the marked progress of economic science in Germany, expresses himself as follows concerning France :

France has done almost nothing for the evolution of economic science since the outbreak of the French Revolution of 1789. Political economy has in France degenerated into a mere tool of the powerful class. Nothing is so calculated to fill one with despair for France as French political economy. Rabid socialism confronts cold-blooded, selfish political economy, and where is a common standing ground? There is so little economic liberalism in no other modern nation.<sup>1</sup>

This is a severe judgment ; and, unfortunately for us, it is not merely an individual opinion. Many economists, not only in America but also in Europe, would be likely to express the same conclusion, although possibly in a milder form. It is a commonly accepted opinion in the scientific world that the study of economics in France is decidedly on the wane ; that the French genius, which formerly took the initiative in so many fields, and which even in the domain of economics paved the way for Adam Smith, has become barren ; and that her most distinguished economists are something like riding-school horses, well trained, but trained to move continually in the same circle.

With two or three exceptions, French authors are seldom quoted in recent economic works. An examination of the lists of authorities now usually appended to new publications will convince us of this fact. And if by chance a French name is mentioned, it is usually not in very flattering terms. Professor Ingram, in his *History of Political Economy*, gives only a very small place to the French. As for the German

<sup>1</sup> Ely, Introduction to Political Economy, p. 324.

economists, it is an accepted fact with them that the French economists are trifling and superficial, adroit in extricating themselves from tight places, but incapable of deep or original thought and unable even to understand German science.

There is indeed a certain element of injustice in this verdict,—the injustice which ever condemns the losing side. Nineteen years ago the French sustained an overwhelming defeat. The consequences have been felt not only in the field of politics but in all other domains, even in those where the fortune of war seems to play no part. The defeat of their standards and the humiliation of their soldiers were quite sufficient to impair their prestige throughout the whole world and to react on their industries, their fashions and their language. Their Lyons silk appeared less beautiful, their champagnes less sparkling, their Parisian women less pretty and their economists less learned! And let no one believe that this feeling is confined to the masses. The most distinguished intellects are unconsciously influenced by it. They also are swept along by the irresistible current. All foreigners now flock to the German universities. It is only there that they learn to know French science, which, as we can readily imagine, is not likely to be presented to them in the most favorable light. French science in Europe partly shares the fate of the French republic. It is kept in the background. As an Italian professor very wittily wrote to me lately, the “triple alliance” has been carried into the scientific world.

But making all allowance for the bias of our judges, it must be owned that their judgment contains, unfortunately, far too large an element of truth. It is only too true that for some time, and especially of late years, economic science in France has simply followed the traditions of the old school and has opened out no new vistas to the mind. It is not to be denied that in the economic movement of our day France has played by no means so brilliant a part as in philology, in mathematics, in biology or, above all, in art and letters. Not that she has failed to produce superior men,—men in our opinion equal to those of any other country,—but certain

causes have paralyzed their genius and have prevented it from obtaining those results which a more favorable environment would have secured.

I desire here to investigate as impartially as possible the causes which have impeded the progress of economic science in France, and which have prevented her from occupying a position as prominent as she could rightfully have claimed. This investigation will perhaps be not without benefit to the American public, who, while there is yet time, may learn from our example what dangers to avoid.

## I.

I have just remarked that if the results achieved by French economics have not been what we might expect, it is not for want of men. Let me begin by recalling some of the less familiar names. It is now generally acknowledged that the Physiocrats—or rather, as they were then already called, the Economists—were the real founders of political economy. The time-honored title of father of political economy, conferred upon Adam Smith, is a marked injustice to that phalanx of eminent men, Quesnay, Dupont de Nemours, Mercier de la Rivière, the abbé Baudeau, Letrosne, Turgot, Condorcet, the marquis de Mirabeau. In no other country and at no other epoch has so brilliant a school sprung so suddenly into being, and never perhaps has the science excited an enthusiasm so general and so ardent. The somewhat scornful indifference with which the works of the Physiocrats have been treated, and for which France herself is chiefly to be blamed, will some day be regarded as one of the most striking examples of ingratitude that history offers. Adam Smith himself fully acknowledges his indebtedness to them. It is even said that he would have dedicated his work to Quesnay, if the latter had still been living. Dr. Quesnay's first economic treatise was published in 1756, that is to say, twenty years before the appearance of Adam Smith's great work. This is not the place to analyze or to criticize the theories of the

Physiocrats. I desire only to point out, that although we may tax them with many errors, excusable in beginners, we certainly cannot charge them with want of originality. To cite but one example: the famous system of Henry George which has caused such commotion was taught word for word by the Physiocrats. Henry George acknowledges this himself, although he asserts that he is only indirectly acquainted with their works. "The French economists of the last century," he says, "headed by Quesnay and Turgot, proposed just what I have proposed, that all taxation should be abolished, save a tax upon the value of land."<sup>1</sup>

But we must not believe that the science of economics in France has spoken its first and last word through the Physiocrats, or that it has remained silent for a whole century. It has had since then illustrious exponents of world-wide reputation. It has had other exponents of no less, perhaps even of greater eminence, of whom no one speaks. It is unneces-

<sup>1</sup> Progress and Poverty, book viii, chap. iv. As Mr. George declares that he knows the Physiocrats only at second-hand, and as the same is probably true of many American readers, I reproduce here by way of curiosity one of the passages in which we may find Henry George's doctrine most clearly expounded. The passage is from Mercier de la Rivière's work on The Natural Order of Political Society: "This order may be summed up in two fundamental rules: first, that taxation should not be arbitrary; second, that it should be nothing but the result of the co-ownership of the sovereign in the net produce of the land within its domain. . . . Thus the essential form of the tax consists in taking the tax directly where it is, and in not wishing to take it where it is not. According to what I have stated in preceding chapters, it is evident that the fund out of which the tax is paid cannot be found in the hands of the landowners, or rather of the farmers who in this respect represent them. For they receive this fund from the land itself, and when they turn it over to the sovereign they do not give anything which really belongs to them. It is therefore from them that the tax must be demanded in order that it may not be a burden on any one." ("Cet ordre se trouve tout entier renfermé dans deux règles fondamentales: la première, que l'impôt n'ait rien d'arbitraire; la seconde, *qu'il ne soit que le résultat de la copropriété acquise au souverain dans les produits nets des terres de sa domination*. . . . Ainsi la forme essentielle de l'impôt consiste à prendre directement l'impôt où il est et à ne pas vouloir le prendre où il n'est pas. D'après ce que j'ai dit dans les chapitres précédents, il est évident que les fonds qui appartiennent à l'impôt ne peuvent se trouver que dans les mains des propriétaires fonciers ou plutôt des cultivateurs ou fermiers qui, à cet égard, les représentent; ceux-ci reçoivent ces fonds de la terre même et lorsqu'ils les rendent au souverain, ils ne donnent rien de ce qui leur appartient: c'est donc à eux qu'il faut demander l'impôt pour qu'il ne soit à la charge de personne.")

sary to mention the name of J. B. Say, who, in a treatise which has been translated into all languages, first sketched the complete plan of the classic text book of political economy, with its four divisions and its symmetrical arrangement; a plan which has been followed without much change by all writers of text books to the present day. Nor is it necessary to mention the name of Bastiat, the very incarnation of optimistic economics, who displayed in his work an eloquence and an ardor unparalleled in the literature of the science. Nor shall I mention others, *dii minores*, such as Dunoyer, who developed the idea, at that time new, of including among economic goods or wealth immaterial products and services; nor Michel Chevalier, who was one of the first to turn to the economic development of the United States for ideas and illustrations.

But all these economists belong to the classical school — to the school which has exclusively controlled and which to-day still dominates the thought of France. I would say a word of some other dissenting economists who, precisely because of their dissent and of certain reasons that I shall mention later, remained unknown to fame and received a tardy recognition only when at last discovered by foreigners.

The first of these was Condillac, — like Adam Smith a philosopher and an economist, but who, in contradistinction to Smith, was well known as a philosopher and almost unknown as an economist. Nevertheless he published in 1776, simultaneously with the appearance of Smith's famous *Inquiry*, the *Treatise on Commerce and Government*, a work which abounds in profound thoughts, and in which the very recent theory of value, that of relative or final utility, was already clearly demonstrated. Condillac not only shows that the value of commodities depends on their utility, but he proves in addition that this utility is necessarily a function of their quantity.<sup>1</sup> Without doing injustice to the illustri-

<sup>1</sup> As Condillac's work is probably read by Americans even less frequently than are those of the Physiocrats, it will perhaps be of service to quote a few sentences from his theory of value: "Since value is based on wants, it is natural that the

ous Glasgow professor, we may confess that we should look in vain for a similar analysis of value in his *Inquiry*. To be more successful in our search we must skip an entire century until we reach Stanley Jevons, who expresses himself in almost precisely the same words as those of Condillac, quoted in the note, and who moreover gives due credit to his predecessor. Condillac was not exactly a heretic. In his time there were scarcely any separate schools. But he was already a dissenter from the dominant school of the Physiocrats; and this sufficed to condemn his work and to enable J. B. Say to pass the following summary judgment on it: "Condillac sought to establish a particular system regarding a subject which he did not understand, but there are some good ideas to be found in the midst of this chatter."<sup>1</sup>

The second of these forgotten economists was Dupuit, an engineer. He published in 1846 and 1849, in a periodical well known even outside of France to engineers, but little read by economists, the *Annales des Ponts et Chaussées*, two purely technical articles on transportation. In these articles, in the

more urgent the want, the greater the value of the commodity, and the less urgent the want, the smaller the value of the commodity. Value hence increases with the scarcity of commodities and decreases with their abundance. It may even decrease to such an extent as to disappear entirely . . . for value depends less on the thing itself than on our estimate of it, and this estimate again is in exact ratio to our wants. It rises and falls as our wants themselves increase and diminish. . . . It is not true that in an exchange equal value is given for equal value. On the contrary, each contracting party always gives a smaller value for a greater. Why? Because, since commodities only have a value relative to our wants, what is valuable to one is less so to the other and *vice versa*." ("Puisque la valeur des choses est fondée sur le besoin, il est naturel qu'un besoin plus senti donne aux choses une plus grande valeur et qu'un besoin moins senti leur en donne une moindre. La valeur des choses croit donc dans la rareté et diminue dans l'abondance. Elle peut même dans l'abondance diminuer au point de devenir nulle. . . . Car la valeur est moins dans la chose que dans l'estime que nous en faisons, et cette estime est relative à notre besoin: elle croit et diminue comme notre besoin croit et diminue lui-même." *Traité sur le Commerce et le Gouvernement*, chap. 1. "Il est faux que dans les échanges on donne valeur égale pour valeur égale. Au contraire, chacun des contractants en donne toujours une moindre pour une plus grande. Pourquoi? C'est que la chose n'ayant qu'une valeur relative à nos besoins, ce qui est plus pour l'un est moins pour l'autre et réciproquement." *Ibid.* chap. 5.)

<sup>1</sup> "Condillac a cherché à se faire un système particulier sur une chose qu'il n'entendait point, mais il y a quelques bonnes idées a recueillir dans ce babil."

course of a general discussion on the usefulness of public works, he enters into a remarkable argument of far-reaching importance on utility and value. Under the name of relative utility, he advances a theory of value similar to that already outlined by Condillac, but strengthened by the application of mathematics, — the very theory, in fact, of which in our days Jevons, Walras and Menger all claim to be the discoverers. We have therefore every reason to assert that this great theory, which now seems to have become an integral part of economic science, is really of French origin.

The third, and the one most worthy of fame, although he had barely caught a glimpse of it when death overtook him, was Cournot. He also was at the same time a philosopher and an economist — an economist recognized to-day by the common consent of all those who apply mathematics to political economy as the founder of their method. In a short treatise published in 1838 under the title, *Recherches sur les Principes Mathématiques de la Théorie des Richesses*, Cournot applies integral calculus to the study of the problems of value, as subject alternately to the law of monopoly and to that of competition; and all this with a power of analysis which unfortunately lies far beyond the mental grasp of the masses, but which has excited the highest admiration amongst those capable of understanding it. Stanley Jevons calls it “wonderful,” and Edgeworth terms it “masterly.” He was one of the first to show the shortcomings of the law of supply and demand as the explanation of value, and also the weakness of the arguments advanced in favor of free trade.

Cournot's work nevertheless remained buried in the gloom of utter indifference, and I do not know that a single copy was ever sold. But twenty years later, attributing his defeat to the dryness of his algebraic formulas, Cournot published another work, in which he reproduced about the same ideas, but divested them of all mathematical forms. Finally, in 1877, he attempted for the third time to imbue the public with his ideas, in a still more elementary form, and prefaced his work with the following melancholy words: “If again I lose my suit, I shall have left



only the consolation that seldom forsakes the unfortunate — that of believing that the decision rendered against them will one day be set aside in the interest of the law, that is, of truth.”<sup>1</sup> And indeed he lost his suit again. He died soon after, just as the attention of foreigners, at length attracted to his work, was about to “order a new trial” and to recompense him for the indifference of his fellow-citizens. I do not believe that a single journal or review gave him an obituary notice. The *Dictionnaire d'Économie Politique*, published in 1856, does not even mention his name; and yet it gives the biographies, or at least the names, of more than thirteen hundred economists, or authors who have written on political economy!<sup>2</sup>

If I have entered with some detail into the account of Cournot, it is because it throws so clear a light on the peculiar condition of economic science in France. It is clear that circumstances must have been very unfavorable to the growth and development of new ideas, when a man of Cournot's genius, who in any other country would have been an accepted leader, did not succeed in finding a single disciple.

If now we bear in mind that, besides those who in the strict sense of the word were economists, Auguste Comte, the illustrious founder of sociology, was a Frenchman; and that of the four great socialists of the first half of the century, Fourier, Owen, St. Simon and Proudhon, three were French, — we shall soon convince ourselves that in the social sciences as elsewhere, France has at no period been wanting in vigorous thinkers, and even in men well fitted to be leaders. Even at the present day, if we count only the living, France may boast of an array of economists as numerous and as brilliant as those of any other country. I may cite the names of MM. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, de Molinari, Courcelle-Seneuil, Levasseur, Léon Say, Baudrillart, Frédéric Passy and Maurice Block. I may cite others less well

<sup>1</sup> “Si je perds encore une fois mon procès, il ne me restera que la consolation qui n'abandonne guère les disgraciés: celle de penser que l'arrêt qui les condamne sera un jour cassé dans l'intérêt de la loi, c'est-à-dire de la vérité.” *Revue Sommaire des Doctrines Économiques*.

<sup>2</sup> As for Dupuit, the *Dictionnaire* mentions his name and the title of his two essays, nothing more. To Condillac the *Dictionnaire* devotes a somewhat lengthier

known but equally worthy of fame ; as, for example, M. de Foville, who has treated statistical subjects with remarkable clearness and intelligence ; M. Juglar, who has made a specialty of predicting economic crises ; M. Pigeonneau, the author of a very remarkable history of French commerce ; M. Claudio Jannet, who has written, among other works, one on the United States of to-day, which has gone through numerous editions ; M. Cheysson, one of the organizers of the section of social economy which met with such well-earned success at the Exhibition of 1889. Besides these, there are in the universities, in the socialistic school and in the Catholic school, others whom I do not name for fear of indefinitely extending my list. All or nearly all are distinguished writers, and some are eloquent orators. If it be true that their works are distinguished by the peculiarly French qualities of clearness, precision and good sense, rather than by depth of thought, still we shall not find them wanting in patient research and broad views.

Thus we find ourselves brought back, but with increasing perplexity, to the question which was propounded at the outset. If France always had, and still has distinguished economists, why does she not occupy a place worthy of herself in the economic movement of to-day ? Why, when we hear everywhere of the "German school" and of the "English school," — and, of late, even of the "Austrian school" and of the "American school," — is the "French school" never mentioned ?

## II.

There certainly is a school in France. But by what name shall we call it ? The classical or orthodox school ? Not exactly ; for if it has preserved the method and the framework of the classical school, it has rejected any number of its theories, even the most important ones, such as the Ricardian

article, gives him an honorable rank "among the popularizers" (these are the actual words), and blames him only for some errors on the subject of value, especially "for having caused serious confusion between value and utility."

theory of rent, the wage-fund doctrine and, in many cases, also the law of Malthus. M. Leroy-Beaulieu, in the preface to his *Essai sur la Répartition des Richesses*, goes so far as to maintain that the whole classical theory of distribution must be reconstructed.

The liberal school? In one sense, yes, because it always adopts for its motto *laisser faire, laisser passer*. But certainly it is not liberal, if we take that sense of the word which suggests broad ideas and tolerance of contrary opinions; for in this respect no school has shown itself more illiberal, more narrow, more rigidly sectarian. What Dr. Ely has said is entirely true: "There is so little liberalism in no other modern nation."

The deductive school? This term would not be appropriate; for many of its most distinguished exponents are statisticians rather than economists, relying on facts alone and priding themselves on being practical men. If only they had shown some little inclination toward general propositions and the deductive method, we should not blame them. We feel much more tempted to blame them for not having given even a modest place to the deductive method *par excellence* — that method which had begun to take such firm root in France, but which was to be transplanted to foreign countries, — the mathematical method.

Its proper name is the optimistic school. The assumption that, if the actual condition of things is not very good, it is at least the best possible; the fixed determination to seek a justification for the economic organization as it exists in all its main lines, such as private property in land, freedom of industry, competition, the wages system; the resolve to oppose all efforts which look to a serious modification of these institutions, — such are the chief characteristics of the school. M. Leroy-Beaulieu, after half a century, simply follows in the footsteps of Bastiat, although he has repudiated the latter's doctrines. The words are different, but the tune is the same. The one, in his *Harmonies Économiques*, sets himself the task of proving that all existing inequalities in property may be traced back, and are directly proportionate, to differences in individual labor;

and that these inequalities, after all, are insignificant beside the benefits which nature lavishes freely and equally upon all. The other, in his *Essai sur la Répartition des Richesses*, which has just been mentioned, develops the thesis that the existing inequalities among men are much less than they seem, and that their tendency is to disappear gradually through the mere working of natural laws and of free competition, — an assertion which, I fear, the economic evolution of the United States is far from confirming. If this school rejects certain laws which the orthodox writers consider fundamental, — such as that of Ricardo, that of Malthus or the wage-fund theory, — it is precisely because these laws have a pessimistic character, because they do not present the existing state of society or its future prospects in a favorable light. If, on the contrary, certain other classical doctrines, such as the fall in the rate of interest,<sup>1</sup> are warmly defended by the French school, it is because these laws present human affairs in a more hopeful light.

It is natural that this school, convinced of the excellence and the permanence of the present economic order, should oppose as useless and harmful all attempts to change it in any of its essential characteristics ; not only when the change is sought through state interference, as by regulating labor, establishing protectionist duties or fixing the price of bread or meat, but also where changes are attempted through private initiative, where the appeal is to freedom, and where a school that professes to be liberal might well be expected to show sympathy. The attitude of the French school on these questions proves it to be more optimistic than liberal. Its members are almost unanimous, for example, in opposing and deriding co-operation, as soon as it aims at productive association and the elimination of the employer. They accept co-operation only in so far as it confines itself to reducing the expenses of the workmen and securing them pensions in case of need.

But why has the dominant school in France encased itself in such complacent optimism? It is certainly not owing to

<sup>1</sup> M. Leroy-Beaulieu makes this doctrine the basis of his argument that the inequality of human conditions is tending to decrease.

hardness of heart or cold egotism, as Dr. Ely erroneously believes. Bastiat was one of the most generous of men, and I do not think that any one of our contemporary economists is insensible to the sufferings of his fellow-beings. Perhaps their attitude may be explained, in part at least, by a feeling very common among the ruling classes in France — by the desire to avoid all the burning questions of economics, all the questions whose discussion might awaken in the minds of the people too great and too dangerous hopes. Their watchword is: "Add no fuel to the flames." In a country like ours, where successive revolutions have weakened all the springs of the political machine, but until now have left the wheels of the economic organization intact, we feel the more keenly the necessity of clinging to all those institutions which we regard as the bases of the actual social order, and which we fondly believe to be indestructible. A further explanation may perhaps be found in a certain lack of philosophic and scientific education, natural among men who for the most part are not mere closet philosophers, but men of action, and who are therefore ill-prepared to accept the scientific method of the day, that of evolution. Accustomed, like the old economic school, to study economic phenomena from a static point of view, they do not easily accept the idea that, from now on, not only social phenomena, but all kinds of phenomena, must be studied, to borrow the terms of Auguste Comte, not from the static but from the dynamic point of view; not only in their relations of co-existence, but in their order of succession; not simply in a state of permanence, which is visionary, but in a perpetual becoming, which is real.

However, there is no reason to lament over the fact that France has had a conservative and optimistic school. Such a school has its distinct place in all countries. But what we must deplore is that this school has become so completely dominant as to have overshadowed all others and stifled all new and promising germs of thought. This is the most interesting point in the present discussion, and one which cannot be understood without special explanation. If it were simply a question of accounting for the absence of the new historical school, my task

would be an easy one. The explanation would readily be found, either in a natural reaction against a school of German origin which has attained its highest development since the war of 1870, or in the peculiar temperament of the French people, which, because prone to general propositions and eager to arrive at exact conclusions, is averse to the method of the historical school. For this method requires patience, research and cautious experiment, and purposely abstains from all foregone conclusions and hasty generalizations. We can therefore readily understand why neither Brentano nor Schmoller succeeded in founding a school in France. But the facts noted do not explain why neither professorial socialism, nor Christian socialism, nor the sociological school, nor even the mathematical school, which through its character and origin seemed particularly adapted to the French genius,—why, in one word, no other school but the one we have described has been able to take root in French soil. Nor do they explain why, in place of the happy and fruitful competition which has been introduced in all other countries to the manifest advantage of science, we find in France a régime of monopoly for the benefit of the very school which condemns monopoly.

The reasons, I think, are as follows.

In the first place, political economy had, until recently, no place in the French system of university instruction. I mean that there was no course of instruction in political economy, holding a distinct place in the curriculum of higher education side by side with other sciences, and entrusted to a distinct body of professors. It is well known that our universities are very differently organized from those of other countries. Entirely reconstructed by Napoleon I, with that love of uniformity and of symmetry which characterizes the French genius and which characterized his in particular, the universities of to-day in the twelve or fifteen principal cities of France are composed of four faculties, law, medicine, science and letters, each with a number of chairs fixed by law and corresponding to the number of subjects officially selected for the examinations. Such at least was the case until the recent reforms, which intro-

duced the system of *chargés de cours*—a system somewhat analogous to that of the *privat-docenten* in Germany. The consequence was that none of the new sciences—nor any of the older sciences, even, which were not already included in these securely barred departments of law, medicine, natural science and letters—could gain the right of domicile in the university. There was no place for them. Such was the case with archæology, anthropology, pedagogy, statistics, the science of finance and, in particular, political economy.

Only very recently has it become possible to crowd these different courses into corners into which they do not fit, by adding each of them to the faculty with which it has most in common. Not until 1878 was political economy joined to the faculty of law, and we shall see that precisely this step marked a new era. Until then political economy had been taught only in a few chairs outside of the university—chairs which may be considered purely ornamental. Of such character is the chair of the *Collège de France*,<sup>1</sup> rendered famous formerly by J. B. Say, Rossi and Michel Chevalier, and to-day by M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu—a chair which never educated disciples, nor even attracted regular students. It is a public course of lectures, where strangers in Paris come to listen as they would pass an afternoon at the Louvre or an evening at the Comédie Française, but whose regular attendants are a few young women who wish to add the finishing touches to their education, and some poor devils who come in winter to keep warm and in summer to keep cool, and at all times to sleep. Besides this, we find chairs of political economy in certain technical schools like the *École des Mines*, the *École des Ponts et Chaussées*, the *École des Arts et des Métiers*, the *École des Hautes Études Commerciales*, where the instruction in economics has a purely practical character, and is little attended by the pupils because it occupies a very unimportant place in the examinations. The chair of political economy in the *École libre des Sciences Politiques* is more important,

<sup>1</sup> The Collège de France, founded by Francis I, does not constitute, properly speaking, a part of the university, since it has no regular students, holds no examinations and confers no degrees.

but it was founded only in 1872. These different chairs have been confided to very able men, who were already well known through their writings but who had never belonged to the university, and to whom a professorship always remained a thing of minor importance, something like a benefice, a title both lucrative and honorary, bestowed on the few lucky ones in favor at court.

Now I consider it a necessary condition of the development of any science, that the instruction should come from a university, and that it should be given by a body of professors especially devoted to the work, to the exclusion of all technical or professional aims. My reasons are as follows. The man who devotes himself to political economy, for example, as a writer or a publicist is concerned only in having his books or articles read. He tries to gain the public ear. In order to do this he follows the stream and adopts the doctrines generally accepted. The professor, on the contrary, is not obliged to seek a public. He has it always with him in the students who attend his lectures or read his books. His ambition — at least the ambition of all professors worthy of the name — is to strike out into new paths on which a few disciples may follow. To be original is thus his great aim; not to follow the crowd, but on the contrary to discover something which none of his colleagues has hit upon before. Doubtless this mental attitude gives rise to many petty rivalries, many puerile quarrels of precedence. But taking all things into consideration, it may be said that this rivalry between professors of the same country or even of different countries, all united by the fraternity of interests which naturally binds men devoted to the same pursuits, and yet separated by desire for individual distinction, is wonderfully favorable to scientific progress. It is precisely this stimulus which has been lacking in France until this day. Moreover, nothing is so conducive to the mental training of the student, or so favorable to the formation of a new school by the teacher, as oral instruction. The Greeks, certainly good judges in matters of education, always made use of it. The best known French economists were and are to-day statesmen, financiers, journalists, politicians,



philanthropists. They are not professors, or they are only secondarily professors; and it is precisely because they are not scholastic that they cannot create a school. Had Cournot been a professor in a university, he probably would have founded a school; at any rate, he would not have waited forty years to become known.

The second cause to which I shall call attention is the existence of the Institute—*l'Institut de France*. Foreigners cannot realize the invisible and all-powerful influence that this body exercises. Could they grasp it, it would serve them as the key to many of the mysteries of our literary and scientific life. It is well known abroad how great is the prestige of the French Academy, to which the most revolutionary and uncompromising writers, like Zola, finally bow and humbly beg for admission. But the Academy is only a part of the great body known as the Institute. The latter includes, besides the Academy, five sections: *les Sciences Morales et Politiques*, *les Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, *les Sciences*, *les Beaux Arts* and *la Médecine*—covering, as we see, the whole field of human knowledge, and exercising to the remotest limits of this vast domain a positively baneful attraction. Not that the Institute is of little worth; it is far from my desire to detract from it. Doubtless it includes some mediocre members; but they form the exception. Doubtless also there have always been outside of its pale many men of genius; but that also is exceptional. After all, it can rightfully claim to have represented for the past three centuries the intellectual élite of France, and I think that no learned association in any other country has such a golden book. But just here lies the trouble. Precisely because it is composed of eminent men, it wields a wide and unfortunate influence. Were it composed of fools, it could do no harm.

Let us see how this influence is exerted. Let us consider only the field of political economy; first, because it is with this field that we are at present concerned, and also because it is here that the influence of which I speak is most strongly felt. Let us take a young man who wishes to pursue the study

of political economy. Naturally he tries to gain some reputation. He consults a placard posted in most of the public institutions, which contains a list of subjects for competition at the Institute. This list, renewed annually or, for certain prizes, every two or three years only, is very long. In fact, the Institute is exceedingly rich, and controls several million francs of income dedicated solely to these prizes. It must be said, parenthetically, that the French, unlike the Americans, do not care to bequeath money to institutions of public instruction or public utility. But they make an exception in favor of the Institute, towards which they show themselves very liberal and generous. The reason is, perhaps, that each prize bears the name of the donor, thus procuring him a certain kind of immortality. The section of the moral and political sciences alone distributes annually about 60,000 francs, divided into thirty prizes varying from 1000 to 12,000 francs each. But to return to our young economist. He glances over this long list and makes his choice, knowing beforehand who will be his judges. These, the members of the section of political economy, eight in number, all belong, without exception, to the school of which we have spoken above. The contestant knows beforehand that, whatever the merit of his work, it will not secure the prize unless it agrees with what are called sound economic doctrines; that is, unless it accepts and even defends private property, capital, the wage system, freedom of industry, free trade *etc.* The Institute does not desire—and we can well understand this attitude by putting ourselves in its place—to commit itself to doctrines which it deems dangerous to the public order by stamping them with its official approval and thus recommending them to the world. It proposes to reward only those works “which will do good.” Our young candidate goes to work with a full comprehension of these facts. He devotes himself conscientiously to the works published by the members of the Institute who are to sit in judgment on the topic which he has selected. He attempts to treat it in such a manner as not to offend them. Whatever originality he may possess, he employs in seeking new arguments favor-

able to the traditional doctrines. After revising this memoir, he sends it to the Institute, where he stands a good chance of being rewarded. As the subjects are very numerous (thirty, as I have said), there are not many competitors for each prize; generally only two or three; a few more if the prize is one of the more important. Besides, the Institute in a spirit of kindness often divides the prizes among the competitors. (Formerly, it is true, the award was postponed to another year, if the articles submitted seemed unworthy.) Let us take it for granted that the article has received the prize. It is then immediately published, with this notice printed on the cover: "Crowned by the Institute"; and the fortunate candidate bears forever after the title, *Lauréat de l'Institut*.

The year following, encouraged by his first success, he returns to the attack. There are professors who thus win prizes five or six years in succession; which, besides the honor conferred, represent a not inconsiderable increase in the income of a young man struggling to make his way.

From this time forward our young economist does not change his opinions. He retains throughout his life the impressions received in his youth. The switchmen of the Institute have placed him on the track, and he keeps the rails to the end of the journey. Once well on in years, he ceases to compete for prizes. But then his ambition changes its form without changing its character. He aspires now to become a member of the Institute. To attain this end, he has one more step to take. He asks permission to make "communications" to the Institute. That is to say, on the day of the meeting he arrives with a manuscript under his arm, which he obtains permission to read aloud. Of course he endeavors to treat his subject in such a way as to arouse, not applause, for the illustrious assembly never applauds, but at least a "murmur of approbation" or even "some visible marks of satisfaction." This places our economist in personal relations with the members of the Institute, his judges of to-day, his electors of to-morrow. He may present himself at the

next vacancy, that is at the death of one of the Immortals.<sup>1</sup> The first time he may have only one or two votes. He awaits a second vacancy and will then see the number of votes increase to six or seven. Patiently he waits for a third vacancy, and if he does not die in the interval he will be elected. Thus will he have achieved the supreme aim of his life, that to which he looked forward from his earliest days. *Hoc erat in votis*. Now he can die content.

But all do not attain their aim. Many die, like Moses, after only looking at the promised land from afar, not having been permitted to enter it. But even if all cannot enter, all turn their gaze towards it. Whosoever devotes himself to literary pursuits in France fixes his eyes from the very beginning of his career and through all the stages of his life upon the cupola of the Institute, as does the true Mussulman on the Kaabah of Mecca. When young, it is there he looks for instruction; arrived at maturity, it is there he seeks fame; and in his old age, it is there that he awaits his highest rewards.

I was accordingly justified in speaking of the attraction exercised by this great body. Everything in fact, revolves about it. From it come light and heat — I mean scientific renown and high official position — for all the satellites that encircle it. If I may be permitted to continue the metaphor, I would say that if by chance some insubordinate planet were to set itself free from this centre of attraction, it would be condemned to darkness, like those outsiders in our solar system called comets, who wander from the sun only to be buried in eternal night. This was the history of Dupuit and of Cournot, who never were members of the Institute or even laureates; and this is doubtless the history of others who have not even succeeded in handing down their names to us. M. Walras, professor at Lausanne, who is now one of the leaders of the mathematical school, is a Frenchman by birth and began his career in France. But he was obliged to seek a foreign home at the little university of Lausanne, in surroundings more favorable to his teachings. I

<sup>1</sup> In strict usage, of course, the title of Immortal is reserved to the members of the Académie Française.

do not mean to say that any one of the men whom I have mentioned has been the object of a systematic hostility — not at all. They never were persecuted, — one can arm oneself against persecutors, — they were simply ignored, which is worse.

The school of the Institute, moreover, possesses certain annexes that greatly increase its influence. I shall mention three which are closely connected with it : the Political Economy Club (*la Société d'Économie Politique*), the *Journal des Économistes*, and the publishing house of Guillaumin.

The *Société d'Économie Politique* was founded in 1842. It meets once a month at a banquet, and during dessert some question in political economy is discussed. It is composed of two hundred and fifty elected members, economists and publicists, almost all of whom belong to the liberal school. At all events, these are the only ones who take part in the debates. The result is an exaggerated harmony which renders these discussions very monotonous. There is, however, one opponent, a single one, an old Fourierist, M. Limousin, who is warmly received because he brings the little grain of pepper that relieves the dulness of this economic feast.

The *Journal des Économistes* with its yellow cover is well known. Founded in 1841, this review is the venerable dean of all the journals of political economy that are published throughout the world. (The Tübingen review dates from 1844 only.) Until fifteen years ago, this was the only review of political economy in France, and to-day, we believe, it has still the greatest number of readers, or at least subscribers, which is not quite the same thing. It enjoys the respect due to its years and to its constant fidelity to liberal traditions. It looks down, with the pride of fallen aristocracy, on all the young and noisy schools that are beginning to raise a commotion around it. For the most part it ignores their existence, and a close perusal of its numbers would lead one to believe that for fifty years nothing has changed in the world.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Économiste Français*, of much more recent birth, is the journal of M. Leroy-Beaulieu. It devotes itself to practical questions, like the London *Economist*, but it is edited in the same spirit as the *Journal des Économistes*, or in a spirit even narrower.

The *Librairie Guillaumin* is not merely a publishing firm. It occupies an important place in the history of economic doctrines in France, and forms by no means the least curious part of this history. It has made a specialty of publishing economic works, and under an able management has gradually become a veritable monopoly. Books, collections, dictionaries have left its presses by the thousands during the past half century, and have diffused its wholesome orthodox doctrines, not alone throughout France, but through those foreign countries which pay more or less attention to our literature. Not that it does not occasionally issue heretical works when it finds its interest in so doing; for instance, it published lately a translation of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*; but this is the exception. Its *Bibliothèque des Sciences Morales et Politiques* is far from showing in this respect such scientific impartiality or such breadth of treatment as the fine Italian collection known as the *Biblioteca della Economista*. With the exception of Thünen and Roscher, not a single German economist is represented in the French collection, and even Stanley Jevons is not to be found there. For years the *Librairie* has been presided over by two amiable spinsters, two sisters (only one survives at present), and its money affairs are managed by the chief personages of the liberal school as silent partners. While defending good doctrines, it does good business—a rare coincidence in this world. This little floor in the Rue Richelieu forms a curious nook in Paris, serving at the same time as the publisher's shop, as the editorial rooms of the *Journal des Économistes*, as the secretary's office of the *Société d'Économie Politique*, and as a place of *rendezvous* for foreign economists on their way through Paris. It is also a nursery for young economists, who are trained there for editors, followers of correct principles, all destined to become one day laureates of the Institute, perhaps even academicians.

If now the reader will kindly observe that the same persons are at once members of the Institute, partners of the house of Guillaumin, editors of the *Journal des Économistes*, presidents or vice-presidents of the *Société d'Économie Politique*,

they will readily solve for themselves the problem which was stated a short time ago : Why has there been but one school in France during the last half century ? The reason is, that there was no possible place for any other. Shut up in the Institute as in a citadel, protected by the three institutions just spoken of as by so many outworks, the liberal school held all the roads leading to honor, to official position and even to the attention of the public. It could readily believe and make the people believe that it represented the true science, the whole science and the only science, and that its future was inseparably connected with the future of political economy. Like the Physiocrats of old, its followers called themselves "the economists," and in the meetings of the Political Economy Club such questions as this were gravely discussed : "Can one be an economist and a protectionist at the same time ?" or again : "Can one be a socialist and call himself an economist ?"

Such a condition of things could not last forever without causing the death of all economic science in France, and even the death of the dominant school itself. This school in fact suffered from the absence of all competitors and experienced in itself, although without knowing it, a law which it understood so well how to demonstrate in its teachings, namely, that all continued monopoly is in the long run injurious to the monopolists themselves. Little by little it lost its sap and its fertility. Constantly recruiting itself from the same set, and, so to say, from the same families, it could not infuse into itself any fresh blood. I once heard, from one of the most eminent representatives of the classical school, this sad avowal, in which there was more truth than vanity : "After us, they will find no one for the Institute." In fact, the rising generation of economists of the classical school appear, as far as we can judge, to be by no means the intellectual compeers of the present generation.

It might have been feared that the classical school, after exhausting the soil in its vicinity, would finally disappear leaving nothing behind it ; like those gigantic trees which, during a long life, blight with their shade the undergrowth, and when

at last they fall, leave on the ground about them an empty, barren circle.

Fortunately for the future of economic science in France, a reaction was setting in, which was destined to change the position of affairs. In order to complete this essay, I have only to explain this movement.

### III.

The first movement of reaction against the liberal school dates back about thirty years. It was initiated by M. Le Play in the publication of his *Ouvriers Européens* in 1855, and by the founding of the *Société d'Économie Sociale* in 1856. M. Le Play, a mining engineer, after thirty years of travel devoted at first to technological studies and later to social researches, founded the school which still bears his name and which marked the first breath of dissent.

This school did not at the outset assume an attitude hostile to the classical school. The *Ouvriers Européens* was even crowned by the Institute, and since then the two schools have been on good terms. Like the liberals, the school of Le Play opposes state intervention, defends the principles of order and ownership and maintains the wages system, corrected only by the recognition of corresponding duties on the part of the employer. Nevertheless, since its origin, it has been separated from the liberal school upon several points of vital importance. In the first place it is not optimistic. It does not believe that the economic organization of modern society is good. It utterly disbelieves that the individual, left to himself, always finds out what is most conducive to the welfare of all or even to his own welfare. Starting with the Christian doctrine of the fall of man, it has no confidence in man's natural instincts, and it expects him to be kept in the right path, if not by the state, at least by the family, by the ruling classes or by religion. It endeavors then to re-establish all these authorities, that of father of the family, that of the employer (*le patron*) and that of the church. Thus it sets its face in quite a different direc-



tion from the liberal school, manifesting a marked Catholic and politico-conservative spirit, whilst utterly disclaiming it.

Besides, its object is not so much political economy as social science; that is, it considers it indispensable not to separate the questions of wealth from those of morals, of legislation and of government. It aims less at the greatest possible production of wealth than at the spread of what it calls by the fine name of "social peace." Finally, it rejects the deductive method and claims to rely only on the observation of facts. It practices this method of induction in a very picturesque manner, quite its own and invented by Le Play, *viz.*, monographs of workmen's families. More than a hundred of these monographs, drawn from all countries, have already been published under the title of *Ouvriers Européens* and *Ouvriers des Deux Mondes*,—and the publication is to be indefinitely continued.

Besides these different works, already very numerous and constituting by themselves a special library, the school of Le Play publishes two reviews. One is the *Réforme Sociale*, dealing especially with all those questions of economic legislation and of history which relate to the condition of the working classes, to the state of landed property, to the system of inheritance, *etc.* The other is the *Science Sociale*, less known than the preceding, which endeavors to formulate the social laws, and contains some suggestive (although a little too systematic) *aperçus*, particularly in relation to the influence of environment and geographical conditions on the formation of different societies. Besides the *Société d'Économie Sociale*, which meets in Paris and whose discussions are generally much more interesting than those of the *Société d'Économie Politique* spoken of above, the school has branches which spread all over France under the name of *Unions de la Paix Sociale*, and recruit themselves chiefly from amongst the Catholic party.

But the spirit of dissent which, in Le Play's school, never led to a complete schism from the orthodox school, was not slow in assuming a more distinctly aggressive character. A new school, more Catholic or rather more ultramontane than Le Play's, hoisted the banner of Christian socialism and entered

boldly upon a campaign against the liberal school. It pronounces the liberal school execrable, and condemns it as responsible for all the ills from which modern society suffers. It proclaims as the sole means of salvation a return to corporate organization in the economic world and a return to provincial organization in the political world. It insists, with Cardinal Manning, upon state intervention for the protection of the working classes. Its anathemas and its demands have found an eloquent interpreter in the Count de Mun, whose votes in the Chamber of Deputies have more than once been cast in the same box with those of the socialist members. For a dozen years it has maintained a review, the *Association Catholique*; and almost everywhere in France it has organized societies, under the name of *Cercles Ouvriers*, which bear a character rather political and religious than social, and which withal do not extend very rapidly.

The socialist school had undergone a long eclipse after the revolution of 1848, and was even supposed to have entirely disappeared. The *Dictionnaire d'Économie Politique*, referred to above, went so far as to say in 1854 that "to speak of socialism was to deliver a funeral oration." But it revived after the war of 1870 and the uprising of the Commune. Some ardent young men, imbued with the theories of Karl Marx (one of them, Lafargue, was his son-in-law), disseminated collectivistic ideas in various journals and even founded in 1880 a *Revue Socialiste*, which did not live. But the review reappeared under the same name in 1885, under the direction of M. Malon, a much more moderate socialist, — a collectivist, but not of the Marx school. Nevertheless, although M. Malon is a conscientious and erudite worker, and although several other socialists, as for example Jules Guesde, have real oratorical power, we may say that the socialist school in France lacks men of talent. For this reason, and for others which it would take too long to explain here, it has not wielded, either in theory or in practice, so great a power as might have been expected. In France there are a certain number of revolutionists, and a crowd of radicals, but hardly any socialists, although the radicals deck

themselves willingly with this title as a feather in their caps. Still, although it be merely a matter of show, this new fashion contributes also to render the doctrines of the liberal school antiquated and unfashionable.

But the heaviest blow dealt to the liberal school came precisely from the party opposed to the socialists ; I mean from the side of the landed proprietors, the manufacturers and capitalists. France had always been protectionist, — I believe wrongly so, but that is neither here nor there. Held down by the strong hand of Napoleon III since 1860 under a system of commercial treaties, negotiated more or less from the free-trade point of view, she had never forgiven the economists whom she accused of instigating this *coup d'État*. In fact, Cobden and Michel Chevalier had prepared the treaties and carried them into execution. Accordingly, at the beginning of the protectionist movement, called forth in Europe about 1876 by the importation of American wheat and inaugurated by Prince Bismarck, the land-owners and manufacturers immediately revenged themselves for their long restraint by overwhelming the economists with a deluge of reproaches. All the agricultural journals, all the agricultural societies, all the agricultural congresses loaded the economists with scorn, calling them disdainfully closet economists, that is, men who know nothing of the world outside of their closets. So great was the storm that the most liberal economists, the most determined champions of free trade, were obliged to withdraw under shelter and *laissez faire, laissez passer* the torrent of protectionism which would have submerged them. One of the most prominent leaders of the free-trade school — the son-in-law of that very Michel Chevalier who had negotiated the treaty of commerce of 1860 — is known to have accepted the presidency of an association of land-owners, whose object was to abolish all commercial treaties and to levy prohibitory duties on foreign wines. I mention this fact simply because it is characteristic. It is only fair to add, as an extenuating circumstance, that the economist in question had presented himself to the electors as a candidate for deputy in one of the interested departments.

Finally, in a sphere entirely removed from that of practical interests, in that of pure speculation, some philosophers, attracted by the social problems, studied them in a very different spirit from that of the liberal school and reached conclusions scarcely orthodox in character. Thus M. Alfred Fouillée, in his work on *La Propriété Sociale et la Démocratie*, questioned the too absolute character of private property in land; and M. Renouvier, the founder of the philosophic school known by the name of "Criticism," ended by acknowledging a right to labor (*droit au travail*) as compensation for those members of society who find themselves, from the mere fact of their birth among the poorer class, shut out on all sides from national wealth. I do not speak here of M. Secrétan, the professor at Lausanne, who came to the conclusion that the wages system must ultimately disappear; for this philosopher, although widely read in France, is not French.

Thus during the past few years, the classical school has seen heavy storm clouds gathering in all quarters of the horizon. Religious beliefs, revolutionary unrest, material interests, philosophic speculations—all apparently combined to work against it, but without greatly disturbing its self-confidence. In truth there was nothing very alarming in these attacks. These adversaries had long been known, and had always been overcome. Since its birth, so to say, the liberal school had been obliged to combat the conservatives of the old régime, the socialists and the protectionists. This was its mission, this was its battle-flag. It sincerely believed, it is true, that it had left those enemies dead on the field; and it is always a disagreeable surprise to see those whom you think you have slain, rise once more and brandish their weapons. But after all, the reigning school had only to begin over again. Its lofty position, both scientific and official, did not appear to be in danger. It retained all its strongholds. The enemy surrounded it, but there could be no real peril unless they forced their way through its defences.

It was the liberal school itself that introduced the enemy into its own stronghold. Here indeed may be said: *Quos vult perdere dementat Jupiter!* This is one of the most curious

episodes in this history. To make it clear some explanations are necessary.

I have already mentioned the fact that up to 1878 political economy had no place in the regular plan of university instruction. The economists of the dominant school rightly considered this a sad gap. They thought that if they could install themselves in the university and teach their liberal doctrines there, they would find it easy to train the younger generation in their ways. They proposed to create a chair of political economy in each faculty of law. They hesitated a little, as one does before making a leap in the dark. The proposition was adopted in the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Instruction Publique* by a majority of only one. However, the reform was effected, and from this time political economy had its distinct place in the official curriculum and in the examination programme of the thirteen faculties of law which exist in France.

The economists never doubted for one instant that these new chairs would be entrusted to veritable economists, that is to say, to men imbued with sound doctrines and educated in their school. Moreover they had their candidates all ready: in fact, they had designated them. Only one point had been forgotten, namely, that according to the university statutes no one can fill a chair in a law faculty, unless he is qualified as *agrégé en droit* or, in some exceptional cases, simply as *docteur en droit*. The former title can be obtained only after eight or ten years' study exclusively devoted to the Roman and French law. Doubtless, it may seem ridiculous enough to require such an apprenticeship for a professor of economics, who will never have to deal with French or Roman law. But such is the law; *dura lex, sed lex*. And the faculties of law, jealous of their prerogatives, would not allow their gates to be forced open. Now, not one of the candidates of the economists was an *agrégé en droit*, and only two or three were doctors. The consequence was that most of the newly created chairs in economics had to be confided, not to economists, but to young jurists, brought up in the study of the Pandects and of the Code Napoléon, but without the faintest idea of economics. They were thus compelled to study

and teach at the same time. They entered upon their work with minds entirely free from preconceived ideas. They were truly new men, belonging to no school. Naturally they commenced by reading the works of the classical economists, the library of the *Maison Guillaumin*. But most of them did not stop here. Their legal studies, above all in Roman law, had familiarized them with the German Romanist literature, and especially with the historical school of jurisprudence of which Savigny was the most famous representative. They were therefore naturally inclined to consult the German economic literature and disposed to understand and to approve of the same historic method applied to economics. It must be remarked, moreover, that a young man who has studied law seriously for ten years, is naturally led to magnify the office of the law-maker. He will be little apt to accept the principle of the liberal school, which maintains that the fewer the laws the better, and that to have no laws whatever were best of all. A lawyer will not be apt to relish the doctrine of *laissez faire*. It is necessarily antipathetic to his modes of thought. In all times and in all countries, but perhaps more distinctly in the history of France than elsewhere, the lawyers have been the natural supporters of the government and even, in a certain sense, the founders of the modern state. Finally, we must note as an important fact that the jurists naturally bring to bear on all questions, economic as well as other questions, the consideration of justice. Justice rather than liberty is what they seek to develop in social relations. Differing from the economists of the classical school, who studied chiefly the production of wealth, they are rather inclined to study its distribution, adopting for their rule the noble maxim which appears in the rules of Ulpian, which all law students learn by heart: *Justitia est constans et perpetua voluntas jus suum cuique tribuendi*.

The new professors of economics in the faculty of law were thus drawn, by their intellectual training and even by their profession, into a path opposite to that of the liberal school. The new movement is that known as professorial socialism, a movement into which their colleagues across the Rhine have

found themselves forced by virtue of almost the same causes. A few remained faithful to the traditions of the liberal school, but others separated themselves from it with a great deal of noise. The professor of economics in the Paris faculty, M. Cauwès, was the first to publish his lectures in 1880. He denied the existence of natural laws in political economy, declared it necessary to deal above all with economic legislation and, adopting the system of List, showed himself a staunch protectionist. This book created an immense scandal in the camp of the classical economists. The venerable *Journal des Économistes* forgot all reserve and overwhelmed the author with positive insults. Attempts were even made to drive M. Cauwès from his chair, but without success.<sup>1</sup> Three years later another professor of economics, in the Montpellier law faculty, published his lectures, which were not much less heretical, although in a different way. The author admitted the existence of natural laws and upheld the cause of free trade. But on the other hand he analyzed in a rather unfriendly way the legitimacy of private property in land, criticized very energetically the system of competition and expressed some doubts as to the permanence of the wages system. Some other young professors expressed themselves very freely in their lectures, or in newspaper articles. Finally in 1887 one of them took the initiative and founded a journal known as the *Revue d'Économie Politique*, having among its editors and contributors all the professors of economics in the faculties of law, even those who were more closely in touch with the classical school. The editors of this review have not pretended to found a school, properly speaking. This would be a presumptuous mistake, considering the slight authority and the different opinions of its principal editors. They merely wished to have an independent organ for themselves, where all views could be freely expressed. With this object in view, they made an appeal to all the teachers of the different economic schools abroad, who for the most part have responded in a very friendly manner. They merely under-

<sup>1</sup> M. Cauwès in fact has since quitted the chair of political economy, although of his own accord. He fills to-day the chair of legal history.

took what I shall call a work of hygienic cleansing; dusting energetically the moth-eaten economic furniture, opening wide the doors and windows to freshen the musty atmosphere, and introducing a flood of sunshine and pure air from the four corners of the world.

Nothing can describe the consternation of the liberal school on finding itself thus betrayed by the very men whom it intended to use as tools. It asked, in amazement, whence came all these mutineers? But, after a little storming it changed its tactics, and resolved to remain silent in future in regard to this unfortunate episode. By a tacit agreement among the leaders of the liberal school, it was decided that the professors of economics in the law faculties were simply presumptuous young men, utterly ignorant of what they were employed to teach, and that their dissent was of small importance and not to be mentioned in good society<sup>1</sup>—“Much ado about nothing.”

But this policy of indifference, which had heretofore been so successful in stifling all dissent, could no longer meet with the same success. The professors of economics in the faculties of law found in the numerous students who attended their lectures (there are not less than five to six thousand law students in France) an audience—a public—that could not be taken from them. They found their support in their colleagues at home and abroad, and in the publishers. In vain had their books been put on the *index expurgatorius* of the liberal school. Their publications came from the press none the less rapidly. And if we remember that all the men in France who are to fill the positions of judges, of lawyers, of administrative officials, and the still greater number of those who are preparing for public life,—if we remember that all these must sit on the benches of the schools of law, we shall readily perceive that the movement begun in these schools is by no means one to be disregarded.

Unfortunately, the law-schools have rather too professional a

<sup>1</sup> Evidence of this tendency can be found in the article of M. de Foville on The Economic Movement in France, in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, January, 1890. Cf. especially (p. 224) the way in which he speaks of the faculties of law.



character. They serve to form officials or statesmen, but seldom erudite scholars. For this reason, the instruction in economics will perhaps not result in so great an intellectual emancipation as might be hoped for. It will not readily adopt so purely scientific a character nor so liberal a method as that of the German universities, where it is placed not in the faculty of law but in the faculty of philosophy or, in some of the newer universities, in a special faculty of political science. To be impartial, I must add, moreover, that although the faculties of law include some distinguished professors of political economy, up to this time they have not produced an economist of sufficient talent or prominence to counterbalance the authority of the leaders of the orthodox school; and the same may be said, in fact, of all the other dissenting schools. Of course we must allow them a little time.

To sum up, it may be said that for some years past a very active economic movement has been going on in France which, taking all things into consideration, is full of promise. We may say that there is now as much economic activity in France as in any other country. There are no less than seven general economic journals — Germany, we believe, has but six — which represent, although unequally, all the principal schools, and which may be classed in their chronological order as follows: the *Journal des Économistes* (1842), the *Économiste Français* (1873), the *Association Catholique* (1876), the *Réforme Sociale* (1882), the *Science Sociale* (1886), the *Revue Socialiste* (1886), the *Revue d'Économie Politique* (1887). There is also a large number of special reviews, such as the *Annales de l'École des Sciences Politiques*, the *Annales Économiques*, the *Revue des Institutions de Prévoyance*, the *Devoir* (organ of the "Famillistère" of M. Godin, now deceased), the *Christianisme Pratique* (founded by an association of Protestant divines), the *Revue Économique de Bordeaux*, the *Bulletin de la Société de Statistique*, the *Idée Nouvelle* (organ of the Marxist school), five or six co-operative or mutualist journals, etc. Moreover, there is no important literary review or political paper without several

editors in charge of economic questions. There are three or four societies of political economy in Paris, one in Lyons, one in Bordeaux. The public, in all social classes, in all political parties, in all religious sects, takes a burning interest in economic and social questions. All this augurs well. In the light of these facts, I am unable to endorse the melancholy assertion made recently by M. de Foville: "We must admit that political economy in France has lost, during the past ten years, much of the ground which it had gained in earlier years."<sup>1</sup> Not at all! It is not political economy which has lost during the past ten years; it is only the orthodox school, which is by no means the same thing. On the contrary, all the ground which it has lost has been a distinct gain for the science.

Now, what is to be the outcome of this confused medley? Shall we witness the birth of some great economist or of some great school like that of the Physiocrats? And will the science of economics in France, after the lapse of a hundred years, blossom forth anew, like the plant which, if tradition is to be trusted, flowers but once a century? A not distant future will tell us.

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<sup>1</sup> The Economic Movement in France, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, January, 1890.